

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSM-05 HA-05  
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3850  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
USMISSION SINAI

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E.O. 11652: NA  
TAGS: PINT, IS  
SUBJECT: ROUND UP OF RECENT ISRAELI PRESS SPECULATION ON  
DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN'S POSITION IN THE GOI CABINET

REF: TEL AVIV 7841

1. ISRAELI PRESS REPORTS JUNE 27 ARE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR  
FAVORABLE ASSESSMENT OF DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN'S APPEAR-  
ANCE BEFORE MEETINGS OF THE HERUT KNESSET FACTION AND THE  
LIKUD BLOC MONDAY EVENING, JUNE 26. ONLY EIGHT DAYS AFTER  
THE CABINET ANNOUNCED ITS REPLIES TO THE TWO AMERICAN QUES-  
TIONS, WEIZMAN HAD BEEN ASKED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE MEETINGS  
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TO EXPLAIN HIS OUTSPOKEN CRITICISM OF ISRAEL'S PEACE POLICIES  
AND HIS VOCIFEROUS ATTACKS AGAINST DAYAN AND PRIME MINISTER  
BEGIN. HOWEVER, CRITICISM OF THE DEFENSE MINISTER IS REPORTED  
TO HAVE BEEN MILD AT BOTH MEETINGS, WITH NONE OF THE PARTICI-  
PANTS DEMANDING WEIZMAN'S IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL. INSTEAD,  
WEIZMAN IS REPORTED TO HAVE MANAGED TO ELICIT THE SUPPORT  
OF MANY OF HIS FELLOW MK'S IN A SPEECH HE DELIVERED BEFORE

THE HERUT FACTION.

2. WEIZMAN REPORTEDLY TOLD THE MEETING HE BELIEVES PRESIDENT SADAT IS SINCERE IN HIS QUEST FOR PEACE. THE JERUSALEM POST (BRILLIANT) QUOTES WEIZMAN AS HAVING CAUTIOUSLY TOLD THE ASSEMBLED PARTY MEMBERS, "IT WAS POSSIBLE -- AND IT MAY STILL BE POSSIBLE -- TO REACH PEACE." SADAT NEEDS "A FIG LEAF" REGARDING JUDEA AND SAMARIA -- A STATEMENT FROM ISRAEL -- AND THEN HE MAY MAKE A SEPARATE AGREEMENT. THIS QUOTE IS TYPICAL OF WEIZMAN'S COMMENTS WHICH APPEAR IN ALL THE MAJOR ISRAELI PAPERS.

3. WEIZMAN WAS REPORTEDLY CRITICAL OF DAYAN AT SEVERAL POINTS DURING THE MEETINGS. HE COMPLAINED THAT DAYAN WAS TRYING TO INCREASE AMERICAN INVOLVMENT IN THE NEGOTIATIONS EVEN THOUGH ISRAEL HAD ALL ALONG ASPIRED TO DIRECT TALKS. HE RECALLED THAT DURING THE ISMAILIYA SUMMIT MEETING DAYAN SUGGESTED AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THE MILITARY COMMITTEE. WEIZMAN ALSO REFERRED IN GENERAL TERMS TO DAYAN'S REPORTED OFFER TO RETURN ALL OF THE SINAI TO EGYPT, SAYING THAT IDEAS INFLUENCING ISRAEL'S SECURITY HAD BEEN AIRED WITH THE EGYPTIANS BEFORE HE OR THE CABINET SECURITY COMMITTEE HAD BEEN CONSULTED. BRILLIANT WRITES THAT WHEN ONE HERUT MK RECALLED THAT WEIZMAN HAD WANTED TO INCLUDE DAYAN IN THE LIKUD LIST BEFORE THE KNESSET ELECTIONS, WEIZMAN REPLIED THAT THIS HAD BEEN HIS IDEA ONLY "TO SUCCEED IN THE ELECTIONS  
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...I DIDN'T MEAN HE SHOULD BE A FOREIGN MINISTER."

4. WEIZMAN REPORTEDLY HAD WORDS OF PRAISE FOR PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, TELLING THE MK'S THAT HE BELIEVED PEACE WAS POSSIBLE UNDER THE PRIME MINISTER AND THAT HE BELIEVED A PEACE AGREEMENT WOULD EVENTUALLY BE REACHED. HOWEVER, SEVERAL PRESS REPORTS NOTE THAT AT THE SAME TIME WEIZMAN WAS BITTER THAT ON FRIDAY, JUNE 16, BEGIN HAD LED HIM TO BELIEVE THAT HE WAS NEARING WEIZMAN'S PROPOSALS ON HOW TO ANSWER THE TWO U.S. QUESTIONS, BUT HAD THEN TURNED THE TABLES AT THE CABINET MEETING THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY UNDER PRESSURE FROM DAYAN. ACCORDING TO REPORTS BEGIN REJECTED WEIZMAN'S COMPLAINTS, SAYING HE HAD NOT DISCUSSED HIS PROPOSED REPLY WITH ANYONE BEFORE THE SUNDAY CABINET SESSION. IN WHAT WAS SEEN BY REPORTERS AS OFFERING AN OLIVE BRANCH, WEIZMAN DECLARED HIS SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL'S PROPOSAL FOR LOCAL AUTONOMY IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA, "AND I HAVE NEVER SAID OTHERWISE."

5. WEIZMAN'S APPEARANCE AT THE MEETING FOLLOWED SEVERAL DAYS OF PRESS SPECULATION THAT THE "WEIZMAN AFFAIR" WAS BEING DROPPED BY BOTH BEGIN AND WEIZMAN IN THE HOPE THAT IT WOULD SOON BE FORGOTTEN. PARA TWO OF REFTEL REPORTED PRESS

REACTION TO THE QUOTE ATTRIBUTED TO WEIZMAN IN JUNE 20 EDITION OF DAVAR THAT, "THOSE TWO MEN (BEGIN AND DAYAN) HAVE BEEN LYING TO US FOR MONTHS. THEY ARE LEADING THE NATION TOWARD WAR." THE FOLLOWING DAY WEIZMAN ISSUED THROUGH THE CABINET SECRETARY AN OFFICIAL DENIAL OF THE REPORTED STATEMENT. THE DENIAL, WHICH WAS REPORTED IN ALL MAJOR PAPERS, ASSERTED THAT THE DAVAR REPORT WAS "A COMPLETE FABRICATION." ACCORDING TO A POST (LANDAU) ARTICLE, JUNE 22, WEIZMAN ASKED THE CABINET SECRETARY TO ISSUE THE DENIAL IN HIS NAME UNDER PRESSURE FROM BEGIN DURING A MINISTERIAL CABINET MEETING. THE POST AND DAVAR BOTH NOTED JUNE 22 THAT THE DENIAL PERTAINED SOLELY TO THE DAVAR REPORT, NOT TO OTHER PRESS REPORTS OF WEIZMAN'S SHARP AND BITTER CRITICISM OF THE CABINET DECISION AND PARTICULARLY DAYAN'S ROLE IN IT.

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BOTH PAPERS POINT OUT THAT THE DAVAR REPORT WAS THE ONLY ONE IN WHICH WEIZMAN ALLEGEDLY FOCUSED HIS CRITISIM ON BEGIN HIMSELF. HOWEVER, WEIZMAN NEVER DENIED, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVING SAID, "I AM GOING TO PREPARE THE ARMY FOR THE NEXT WAR," AS HE LEFT THE CABINET SESSION.

6. HAARETZ (MARPMDF) ARGUED ALREADY ON JUNE 22 THAT WEIZMAN'S POSITION IN THE CABINET WAS NOT SERIOUS. HE NOTED THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTER HAD CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT IN THE KNESSET FOR HIS VIEWS, SUPPORT WHICH CUT ACROSS PARTY LINES. FOLLOWING SEVERAL REPORTS THAT WEIZMAN'S OFFICE HAD REPEATEDLY SAID THE DEFENSE MINISTER HAD NO INTENTION OF RESIGNING AS A RESULT OF THE FUROR WHICH ERUPTED FOLLOWING HIS PUBLIC

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CRITICISMS OF THE CABINET DECISION, MA'ARIV (EREZ) CLAIMED SOURCES CLOSE TO THE PRIME MINISTER HAD SAID BEGIN HAD NO INTENTION OF ASKING FOR WEIZMAN'S RESIGNATION. FURTHERMORE, EREZ CONTINUED, ALTHOUGH WEIZMAN INTENDS TO FOCUS HIS ATTENTION ON THE AFFAIRS OF THE DEFENSE MINISTRY, HE WILL CONTINUE TO EXPRESS HIS POLITICO-MILITARY OPINIONS AT CABINET SESSIONS, MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO HAVE HIS VIEWS ACCEPTED BY THE CABINET. ON FRIDAY, JUNE 23, WEIZMAN, BREAKING HIS PUBLIC SILENCE OVER HIS DISPUTE WITH BEGIN, SAID IN A TELEVISION INTERVIEW THAT HE WOULD NOT RESIGN AND WOULD CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR A MODERATE POLICY. ASKED IF HE WOULD QUIT OVER THE FUROR CAUSED BY HIS OUTBURST, WEIZMAN REPORTEDLY RESPONDED, "IT IS MY DUTY MORE THAN EVER TO REMAIN IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY" TO INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT DECISIONS.  
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7. ON SUNDAY JUNE 25, REPORTS CIRCULATED THAT COMMERCE MINISTER YIGAL HURVITZ WOULD SEEK TO OUST WEIZMAN FROM THE CABINET. A SIMILAR DEMAND FOR ACTION AGAINST WEIZMAN WAS ALSO REPORTEDLY RAISED IN THE HERUT FACTION OF LIKUD AT THE INITIATIVE OF AGRICULTURE MINISTER ARIEL SHARON. HOWEVER, THESE REPORTS LED TO NRP WARNING THAT IT WOULD NOT TOLERATE WEIZMAN'S REMOVAL. NRP CIRCLES REPORTEDLY TOLD THE POST THEY HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT IF WEIZMAN WENT, SO MIGHT THEY. THE POST (SEGAL) CLAIMED THAT THE NRP CABINET MINISTERS (BURG, HAMMER, AND ABU-HATZEIRA) WERE RESOLVED TO BLOCK ANY ANTI-WEIZMAN MOVES. WEIZMAN ALSO WON THE SUPPORT OF FINANCE MINISTER EHRLICH (LIBERAL) WHO REPORTEDLY TOLD A TELEVISION INTERVIEWER SUNDAY THAT HE SAW NO REASON FOR WEIZMAN TO LEAVE THE CABINET.

8. IN A SEPARATE ARTICLE JUNE 25, THE POST (LANDAU) CLAIMED THAT SOURCES CLOSE TO BEGIN HAD SAID THE PRIME MINISTER DID NOT WISH TO BRING ABOUT WEIZMAN'S RESIGNATION. LANDAU ASSERTED THESE SOURCES HAD SAID THAT FOLLOWING WEIZMAN'S

DENIAL OF THE DAVAR REPORT, BEGIN HOPED THE ENTIRE EPISODE COULD QUIETLY FADE AWAY. WEIZMAN'S DENIAL, THESE SOURCES REPORTEDLY SAID, WAS A POLITICAL FACT. IT REPRESENTED A MEASURE OF READINESS ON HIS PART TO ACCEPT BEGIN'S LEADERSHIP, EVEN THOUGH HE DID NOT AGREE WITH THE CABINET RESPONSE TO THE TWO U.S. QUESTIONS. WHILE BEGIN WOULD NOT BE ADVERSE TO A SHARP REBUKE FOR WEIZMAN ADMINISTERED BY EITHER THE HERUT FACTION OR BY THE LIKUD AS A WHOLE, HE WOULD NOT WANT THE MATTER TO PROCEED ANY FURTHER THAN THAT AND LEAD TO WEIZMAN'S RESIGNATION.

9. DURING THIS WEEK'S CABINET SESSION THE WEIZMAN AFFAIR WAS REPORTEDLY RAISED ONLY OBLIQUELY -- BY DAYAN TO UNCLASSIFIED

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DENY AN ALLEGATION ATTRIBUTED TO SOURCES CLOSE TO WEIZMAN IN THE WEEKEND PRESS TO THE EFFECT THAT HE (DAYAN) HAD CONCEDED THE WHOLE OF THE SINAI, INCLUDING THE AIRFIELDS THERE, TO EGYPT PRIOR TO THE NEGOTIATIONS AND WITHOUT CONSULTING THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. AT A BRIEF MEETING BEFORE THE CABINET SESSION BEGAN, BEGIN AND WEIZMAN REPORTEDLY DISCUSSED AFFAIRS OF STATE WITHOUT REFERRING TO THE WEIZMAN AFFAIR. POST REPORTERS (LANDAU, BRILLIANT, AND SAFADI) ASSERTED THAT POLITICAL OBSERVERS TOOK THIS AS ADDITIONAL CONFIRMATION THAT BEGIN HOPES THE AFFAIR WILL DIE DOWN NATURALLY WITHOUT LEADING TO WEIZMAN'S RESIGNATION, A RESIGNATION, THEY ASSERT, WHICH COULD ENDANGER THE STABILITY OF THE ENTIRE CABINET.

10. THE WEIZMAN AFFAIR WAS ALSO REPORTEDLY DISCUSSED IN OTHER COALITION FACTIONS ON MONDAY. THE POST (BRILLIANT) REPORTS THAT DMC MK'S ASSAF YAGURI AND SHMUEL TOLEDANO CALLED FOR BACKING WEIZMAN. YARGURI, BRILLIANT NOTES, WHO HAD SUPPORTED BEGIN'S POSITION ON THE REPLIES TO THE U.S. QUESTIONS, SAID THE DEFENSE MINISTER MUST REMAIN IN THE CABINET SINCE HARMING WEIZMAN'S STATURE CREATES AN IMPRESSION THAT ISRAEL IS HARDENING ITS STAND. LA'AM KNESSET MEMBERS YESTERDAY DROPPED THEIR DEMANDS FOR WEIZMAN'S RESIGNATION ALTHOUGH THEY WERE SHARPLY CRITICAL OF HIS EVALUATIONS AND PROPOSED POLICIES. NEITHER COMMERCE MINISTER HURVITZ NOR MK SHAMIR (BOTH LA'AM) REITERATED THEIR DEMANDS, FIRST STATED LAST WEEK, THAT WEIZMAN QUIT THE CABINET. BRILLIANT WRITES THAT THE NEW MOOD IS PARTLY A REFLECTION OF THE REALIZATION THAT WEIZMAN IS AN IMPORTANT ATTRACTION FOR THE LIKUD AT THE POLLS. LA'AM MEMBERS, HE SAYS, MAY ALSO BE RECKONING THAT A SHARP ATTACK ON WEIZMAN WOULD RALLY HERUT MEMBERS BEHIND THE DEFENSE MINISTER.

11. WRITING IN YEDIOT, MK HACOEN (LABOR) CHARACTERIZED WEIZMAN'S POSITION AS "POLITICAL SANITY." HE SAID THE

COUNTRY SHOULD BE GRATEFUL TO THE DEFENSE MINISTER FOR  
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POINTING OUT THE GRAVITY OF THE CABINET DECISION NOT TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING IN ITS REPLIES TO THE TWO U.S. QUESTIONS. THE ONLY PUBLICLY EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO WEIZMAN APPEARED IN MA'ARIV (KATZ) WHICH CRITICIZES WEIZMAN FOR DETRACTING FROM THE NATION'S SPIRIT BY ARGUING THAT ISRAEL IS NOT DOING ENOUGH FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE. ALTHOUGH KATZ CHARGES THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTER IS BLURRING REALITY, HE ISSUES NO CALL FOR WEIZMAN TO RESIGN HIS CABINET POSITION.

12. MANY PRESS STORIES HAVE NOTED THAT WEIZMAN HIMSELF APPARENTLY REGRETS SOME OF THE COARSE PHRASEOLOGY HE USED IN HIS PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO DAYAN. PRESS REPORTS EMPHASIZE THAT WHILE WEIZMAN IS NOT EXPECTED TO CEASE FIGHTING FOR HIS VIEWS, HE WILL MOST LIKELY KEEP A VERY LOW PROFILE IN THE WEEKS AHEAD AND WILL DESIST FROM FURTHER OUTSPOKEN CRITICISM OF THE MAJORITY LINE. IF HE SUCCESSFULLY STICKS TO SUCH A POLICY, THE GENERAL FEELING IN THE PRESS APPEARS TO BE THAT THE ENTIRE EPISODE WILL BE FORGOTTEN.  
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